

CLAIMS

1. A process control application for implementation and use in a control programming environment associated with a process control system having a multiplicity of process control elements therein, the process control application comprising:

a documentation field for one of the multiplicity of process control elements, said documentation field including textual information displayable to a user and adapted to be stored in a memory within the process control system; and

a context sensitive uniform resource locator disposed in the documentation field to point to an address of an external entity, the address to which the context sensitive uniform resource locator points dynamically changing in response to changes to an attribute value of the one of the multiplicity of process control elements.

2. The process control application of claim 1, wherein the uniform resource locator includes a distinctive characteristic that distinguishes the uniform resource locator as a uniform resource locator when displayed.

3. The process control application of claim 2, wherein the distinctive characteristic is underlining.

4. The process control application of claim 2, wherein the distinctive characteristic is a particular color.

5. The process control application of claim 1, wherein the uniform resource locator identifies an entity in a second programming environment that is a different programming environment than the control programming environment.

6. The process control application of claim 5, wherein the second programming environment is a word processing environment.

7. The process control application of claim 5, wherein the second programming environment is a World Wide Web environment.

8. The process control application of claim 5, wherein the second programming environment is a local area network environment coupled to the process control system.

9. The process control application of claim 1, wherein the one of the multiplicity of process control elements is a software element capable of being implemented on a processor within the process control system.

10. The process control application of claim 9, wherein the one of the multiplicity of process control elements includes a function block.

11. The process control application of claim 1, wherein the one of the multiplicity of process control elements is a physical device capable of being used within the process control system.

12. The process control application of claim 1, wherein the external entity is a text file.

13. The process control application of claim 1, wherein the external entity is a program adapted to be executed on a processor.

14. The process control application of claim 13, wherein the process control application is located in a first computer and the external entity is located in a second computer different than the first computer.

15. The process control application of claim 1, wherein the uniform resource locator includes a generalized field that has a descriptor identifying a property of the one of the multiplicity of process control elements, and further including a routine that replaces the generalized field with the identified property of the one of the multiplicity of the process control elements to create a new uniform resource locator when the uniform resource locator is selected by a user.

16. The process control application of claim 15, wherein the property of the one of the multiplicity of process control elements is the name of the one of the multiplicity of process control elements.

17. The process control application of claim 15, wherein the property of the one of the multiplicity of process control elements is a location

indication associated with a manner in which the one of the multiplicity of process control elements is located within the process control system.

18. The process control application of claim 1, further including a browser that uses the uniform resource locator to locate and launch an entity in a second programming environment that is a different programming environment than the control programming environment.

19. A process control element adapted for implementation and use in a control programming environment associated with a process control system, the process control element comprising:

a process function operator;

a documentation field including textual information, said documentation field displayable to a user and adapted to be stored in a memory within the process control system; and

a context sensitive uniform resource locator disposed in the documentation field to point to an address of an external entity, the address to which the context sensitive uniform resource locator points dynamically changing in response to changes to an attribute value of the process function operator.

20. The process control element of claim 19, wherein the uniform resource locator includes a plurality of distinctive characteristics which distinguish the uniform resource locator as a uniform resource locator.

21. The process control element of claim 19, wherein the uniform resource locator identifies an entity in a second programming environment that is a different programming environment than the control programming environment.

22. The process control element of claim 19, wherein the process function operator is a process control device.

23. The process control element of claim 19, wherein the process function operator is a software element capable of being implemented on a processor within the process control system.

24. The process control element of claim 19, wherein the uniform resource locator includes a generalized field that has descriptor identifying a property of the process function operator, which property of the process function operator replaces the generalized field of the uniform resource locator when the uniform resource locator is used.

25. The process control element of claim 19, wherein the external entity is a text file.

26. The process control element of claim 19, wherein the external entity is a program adapted to be executed on a processor.

27. The process control element of claim 26, wherein the process control element is located in a first computer and the external entity is located in a second computer different than the first computer.

28. A process control system comprising:

a computer readable memory;

a display device adapted to display information stored in the computer readable memory;

a process control element adapted to be used in a control programming environment;

a documentation field including textual information related to the process control element, said documentation field stored in the computer readable memory and displayable via the display device; and

a context sensitive uniform resource locator disposed in the documentation field that points to an address of an external entity, the address to which the context sensitive uniform resource locator points dynamically changing in response to changes to an attribute value of the process control element.

29. The process control system of claim 28, further including a browser that uses the uniform resource locator when the uniform resource locator is displayed and selected on the display device.

30. The process control system of claim 28, wherein the uniform resource locator identifies an entity in a second programming environment that is a different programming environment than the control programming environment.

31. The process control system of claim 28, wherein the uniform resource locator includes a generalized field that has descriptor identifying a property of the process control element, and further including a routine that replaces the generalized field within the uniform resource locator with the property identified by the descriptor to create a new uniform resource locator to be delivered to a browser.

32. The process control system of claim 28, wherein the process control element is a physical process control device.

33. The process control system of claim 28, wherein the process control element is a software element capable of being implemented on a processor within the process control system.

34. The process control system of claim 28, wherein the external entity is a text file.

35. The process control system of claim 28, wherein the external entity is a program adapted to be executed on a processor.

36. The process control system of claim 35, wherein the routine is located in a first computer and the external entity is located in a second computer different than the first computer.

37. A method of providing support for a process control element used within in a control programming environment, comprising the steps of:

storing textual documentation pertaining to the process control element in a computer readable memory used within the control programming environment;

storing a context sensitive uniform resource locator in the textual documentation, wherein the context sensitive uniform resource locator points to an address of an external entity, the address to which the context sensitive

uniform resource locator points dynamically changing in response to changes to an attribute value of the process control element; and

displaying the textual documentation including the uniform resource locator on a display device to enable selection of the uniform resource locator.

38. The method of providing support for a process control element of claim 37 further including the step of using a browser to access an entity referred to by the uniform resource locator when the uniform resource locator is selected via the display device.

39. The method of providing support for a process control element of claim 37, further including the steps of placing a generalized field having a descriptor identifying a property of the process control element within the uniform resource locator and replacing the generalized field within the uniform resource locator with the property identified by the descriptor when the uniform resource locator is selected via the display device.